



## News Release

**For Immediate Release**

Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2003

**Media Contact:**

Lena Dibble

Tobacco Control Program

(801) 538-6917

### **Tobacco and Hollywood: Behind the Scenes Phoenix Alliance Sends a Message to Hollywood**

(Salt Lake City, UT) – The Phoenix Alliance, Utah’s anti-tobacco youth advocacy group, is speaking out against the excessive use of tobacco products in Hollywood movies. Through a new campaign called “Tobacco and Hollywood: Behind the Scenes,” the Phoenix Alliance hopes to make youth aware of the fact that tobacco prevalence in the movies is greatly exaggerated. The campaign will begin on Dec. 16 at The Carmike Hollywood Connection 16, 3217 South Decker Lake Drive in West Valley City with a press conference at 10:00 a.m. and a special midnight screening of *Lord of The Rings: Return of The King* that evening. At the screening the Phoenix Alliance will premier their Hollywood postcard writing campaign and the Hollywood Project movie teaser slide, which will appear in movie theatres across Utah.

“Big Tobacco has been working behind the scenes in Hollywood for many years to glamorize smoking and promote its product to a global audience,” said Lena Dibble, media liaison for the Utah Department of Health’s Tobacco Prevention and Control Program. “Smoking in the movies is a major pro-tobacco influence, especially for teens, who often mirror their favorite movies’ stars by imitating their actions and behaviors, including smoking.”

The theme of this year’s campaign is “I smoke because Hollywood tells me to smoke. Has anyone seen my free will?” In addition to the movie-screening event on Dec. 16, the campaign will include a radio ad and print materials with the campaign message. Still slides will be shown on screens preceding movies at Carmike Theaters across Utah, and educational materials will be distributed in movie rental stores and at community events.

-More-

“Teens don’t realize that current movie heroes are three times more likely to smoke than people in real life,” said Dibble.

Along with educating teens, the Phoenix Alliance hopes to send a message to Hollywood asking them to put an end to misleading portrayals of tobacco use in film. In the 90’s leading characters lit-up in more than nine out of ten films. Due to the influence of tobacco in the movies 1,070 kids begin smoking everyday, and 340 of the 1,070 will die early as a result.

“Movie studios, actors and actresses need to realize that their behavior on screen is often imitated by teens,” said Bre DeBry, health program specialist. “We hope to persuade Hollywood and the to stop promoting a product that kills every second regular user.”

Efforts to reach Hollywood will include a postcard writing campaign. The postcards include facts about how tobacco use in movies influences teens. Postcards include space for teens to write their own personal message to one of the campaign targets. Postcards will be available for the first time at the *Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* screening. They will be collected by the Phoenix Alliance and sent in bulk to a specific movie studio, actor and actress who will be targeted by the Utah campaign.

“It’s important to get our message to Hollywood,” said DeBry. “Studies suggest that because of smoking in the movies, 52 percent of teens start smoking, a more powerful effect than cigarette advertising. Non-smoking teens whose favorite stars frequently smoke on screen are 16 times more likely to have a positive attitude towards smoking in the future. “

Fore more information and statistics on tobacco use in film visit [www.utahphoenixalliance.org](http://www.utahphoenixalliance.org).

# # #

*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health through preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*